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ABSTRACT

The Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention (AI/DP) Program is an umbrella program serving high-risk students in New York City's public schools. This report focuses on the high school AI/DP program, serving mainly ninth and tenth grade students who met truancy and academic failure criteria. The three short-term program objectives were: (1) improved attendance over 1983-84 rates; (2) an increased number of courses passed; and (3) improved attitudes toward school. The quantitative outcomes reveal that overall, the attendance and achievement objectives were not met: attendance levels remained about the same, while achievement levels declined moderately. Students participating in Project SOAR, the only component of AI/DP which provided intensive academic remediation as well as supportive services, maintained their high attendance and substantially improved both their academic achievement and attitudes toward school. Among the factors significantly affecting the program's equivocal findings were the newness of the program; the diversity of goals and students; and the transition difficulties of ninth graders. Recommendations include: (1) more clearly defined, communicated, and monitored eligibility requirements; (2) clear and measurable objectives for each component; (3) possible expansion of components which offer an integrated program of instruction, remediation and supportive services; and (4) follow-up services to students who no longer receive program services. (ETS)

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HIGH SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT/
DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

1984 - 1985

FINAL REPORT

OEA Evaluation Report

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HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT/ DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

1984 - 1985

FINAL REPORT

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SUMMARY

The Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention (A.I./D.P.) Program is an umbrella program designed to prevent dropouts and increase attendance among targeted groups of high-risk students in New York City's public schools. The umbrella included programs that served students in high schools, community school districts, and special education programs. This report focuses on the high school A.I./D.P. program. The program was first implemented during the 1984-85 school year, supported by $22 million in state-appropriated funds, of which $8.4 million was allocated to the high schools. The Division of High Schools allocated an additional $3.0 million in tax-levy funds to support holding power efforts associated with the A.I./D.P. program.

Eligibility requirements initially established by the Division of High Schools limited program services to students who were absent 25 days during the spring, 1984 term or 50 days during the full 1983-84 school year, and who met at least one of four academic failure criteria: 1) a score of two or more years below grade level on the citywide reading test, 2) failure in three or more major subjects in the final marking period of the previous term, 3) overage by two or more years for the grade being entered or 4) a score below the 20th percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) for non-native speakers of English who had attended an English language school system for at least four years. However, eligibility criteria were later broadened.

The Division of High Schools established three short-term program objectives for students served by the A.I./D.P. program. These objectives included improved attendance over 1983-84 rates, an increased number of courses passed, and improved attitudes toward school. Long-term objectives (which will be measured in subsequent years of program operation) include increases in the number of dropouts returned to the system, and in the number of students promoted from ninth to tenth grade and from tenth to eleventh grade.

The 1984-85 high school A.I./D.P. program was composed of several discrete components designed to meet the needs of different groups of targeted students. Six of these components -- Operation Success, Mentoring, LYFE Day Care, TELSOL, PREP Staff Development, and Holding Power -- existed in some form prior to the development of A.I./D.P. Three components -- Intake/Transition, Extracurricular, and Project SOAR (the latter of which was implemented only in the spring) -- were developed especially for the program.

At least 24,000 students received services from one or more A.I./D.P. components during the 1984-85 school year. Students outcomes included the following:

- Overall, students' attendance remained about the same. However, the average attendance of students with the worst attendance record in 1983-84 improved about five percentage points in 1984-85.

- Overall, achievement rates in terms of the number of courses passed showed a moderate decline. However, achievement levels remained essentially the same from fall, 1984 to spring, 1985. Since the majority of students served by the program were ninth-graders, this suggests that these students were experiencing transition difficulties which eased somewhat during the second term.

- Students participating in Project SOAR (the only component providing intensive academic remediation as well as supportive services) maintained their initially high attendance and substantially improved both their academic achievement and attitudes toward school during the program period.

Among the factors chiefly responsible for the program's equivocal findings were the fact that 1984-85 was the program's first year of operation; various components had different goals and served a diversity of student populations; and many of the students served were ninth-graders who experienced severe difficulties in making the transition to high school.

Recommendations aimed at enhancing program effects include the following:

- The Division of High Schools should clearly define eligibility requirements for A.I./D.P. program services, communicate these criteria to the schools in a timely fashion, and develop effective techniques for monitoring compliance.

- The Division of High Schools should develop clear and measurable objectives which are closely related to the design, aims, and population served by each program component.

- As a consequence of program-induced gains in attendance or achievement, some students may no longer be eligible to receive program services. The Division of High Schools should provide follow-up services to such students to ensure that the gains they have made will be maintained in subsequent years.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention (A.I./D.P.) program is an umbrella program designed to prevent dropouts and increase attendance among targeted groups of high-risk students in New York City's public schools. The program was first implemented in the schools during the 1984-85 academic year, supported by $22 million in state-appropriated funds. The New York State Legislature allocated $13.6 million of these funds to the New York City community school districts, $8.4 million to the high schools, and approximately $400 thousand to special education. The Division of High Schools allocated an additional $3 million in tax-levy funds to support holding power efforts associated with the A.I./D.P. program. This report focuses on the evaluation of the A.I./D.P. program in the high schools.

The high school program was composed of eight discrete components during the fall, 1984 term: these components were Intake/Transition, Extracurricular, Mentoring, Operation Success, LYFE Day Care, TELSOL, Holding Power, and PREP Staff Development. One additional component -- Project Soar -- was added during the spring, 1985 term. For both terms, the Division of High Schools (D.H.S.) assigned at least one component to each of the 110 academic-comprehensive, vocational-technical, and alternative schools in the system.*

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* Other sites providing educational services to adolescents not enrolled in regular public schools, including literacy centers, auxilliary services sites, and outreach centers, also received TELSOL automated telephone answering equipment and funding for a paraprofessional to monitor the equipment. However, these sites were centrally administered and were not visited by members of the evaluation team.

STUDENTS SERVED

The Division of High Schools intended to focus the A.I./D.P. program primarily on ninth and tenth grade students who were most at risk of dropping out of school.* Accordingly, D.H.S. initially stipulated that students receiving program services had to meet both truancy and academic failure criteria.** The truancy criteria was absence for 25 or more days during the spring, 1984 term or absence for 50 or more days during the 1983-84 school year. The academic failure criterion could include a score of two or more years below grade level on the citywide reading test, failure in three or more major subjects in the final marking period, overage by two or more years for the grade being entered, or a score below the 20th percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) for non-native speakers of English who had attended an English language school system for at least four years. However, during the fall, 1984 term, program administrators broadened criteria to include other types of students. These broadened criteria are described in more detail in Chapter II of this report.

Overall, the 1984-85 A.I./D.P. program served approximately 24,000 high school students.***

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* An exception was the Operation Success component, which targeted eleventh and twelfth grade students as well.

** D.H.S. specified these criteria in High School Memorandum #123 issued to high school borough superintendents, high school principals, and principals of alternative high schools in June, 1984.

*** About 14 of the participating high schools did not provide student participation information, therefore, the number of students served by the program was actually higher.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Division of High Schools established three short-term program objectives for A.I./D.P. students:

- A.I./D.P. participants would show higher average attendance in 1984-85 than in the previous school year;
- A.I./D.P. participants would pass more courses in 1984-85 than in the previous school year; and
- Students' attitudes toward school, as measured by a standardized attitude survey, would improve from the beginning to the end of their participation in the program.

In addition, long term program objectives anticipate increases in the number of dropouts returned to the school system, a reduction in the overall dropout rate, and increases in the number of students promoted from ninth to tenth grade and from tenth to eleventh grade. The Office of Educational Assessment/High School Evaluation Unit (O.E.A./H.S.E.U.) will begin to measure these long-term objectives in subsequent years of program operation.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

O.E.A./H.S.E.U. evaluated A.I./D.P. program implementation in the high schools. The evaluation plan was multi-stage and utilized data from several sources:

- School administrators provided 1983-84 and 1984-85 attendance and achievement data for students designated as "high risk" according to High School Memorandum #123.
- Coordinators of components provided Component Rosters describing component services and listing the names and identification numbers of the students receiving component services.
- Members of the evaluation team conducted structured interviews with principals and other administrative staff at all 110 schools receiving A.I./D.P. components. These interviews were conducted in November and December, 1984 and focused on component staffing, types of students served, implementation procedures, and perceived

effectiveness of the components during the fall, 1984 term. The results were reported in the "Interim Report of the 1984-85 High School Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program".

- The evaluation team selected a representative sample of 40 schools to conduct in-depth site visits during the spring, 1985 term. All nine schools receiving the SOAR component and eleven Operation Success sites were included in the sample. Interview questions focused on the number and types of staff members working with each component during the fall and spring terms, criteria used to select students participating in each component, types of services provided to the students, and the specific activities which were most effective in meeting A.I./D.P. program objectives. In addition to these structured interviews, project staff administered an attitude survey to Project SOAR students.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report presents the complete results of the multi-stage evaluation of the high school A.I./D.P. program. Overall program organization and implementation are described in Chapter II, and staff perceptions and suggestions for change are summarized in Chapter III. Student outcomes are presented in Chapter IV, and conclusions and recommendations are discussed in Chapter V.

II. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

D.H.S. developed a multi-component attendance improvement and dropout prevention program to serve the needs of a diverse population of high-risk students. Some of these components were in existence prior to the development of A.I./D.P., while others were developed especially for the program.

The components are listed in Figure 1, along with a brief description of their purposes; the number of schools receiving each component during the fall, 1984 and spring, 1985 terms; the level of funding allocated to each component; and the number of schools that were visited by members of the evaluation team during the spring, 1985 term. The first two components listed on Figure 1 (Intake/Transition and Extracurricular) are new components implemented at a number of sites during the fall, 1984 term. The third component, Project SOAR, was developed for implementation during the spring, 1985 term, while the remaining six components were in existence prior to the development of A.I./D.P. but received additional A.I./D.P. funds so that the staff could augment and expand their efforts to better serve at-risk students.

D.H.S. assigned components to the schools on the basis of each school's attendance improvement and dropout prevention needs. The text below describes implementation of these components in the schools during the 1984-85 school year. The information presented is based on interviews with school administrators at all 110 schools conducted by members of the evaluation team during the fall term, plus interviews with component

FIGURE 1
Summary of High School A.I./D.P. Components as of Spring, 1985

Component[a] Name	Nature/Purpose of Component	Number of Schools Receiving Funds[b] Fall '84	Spring '85	Funding	Number of Schools Visited By O.E.A./H.S.E.U.
Intake/ Transition	Provides a guidance counselor and family worker to screen over-the-counter students for program placement and to ease transition for post-PREP students.	34	39	$2.35 million for salaries of guidance counselors and family workers	26
Extra-curricular	Provides high-interest after-school activities for high-risk and other ninth graders.	44	44	$100,000	23
Project SOAR	Offers a specialized academic program and supportive services for repeating ninth graders.	--[c]	9	$1.70 million	9
Operation Success	Provides counseling and referrals to jobs or skills training for overage and other students.	8	12	$1.67 million to collaborative agencies	11
LYFE Day Care	Offers school-based child care to young mothers who wish to complete their education.	6	6	$325,000	4
Mentoring	Facilitates a one-to-one relationship between an at-risk student and an adult from outside the school environment.	6	13	$100,000	3
TELSOL	Is an automated telephone dialing system which can be used to call students' homes with a variety of messages.	92	92	$2.15 million	27
PREP Staff Development	Provides on-site and central training for school staff members working with the PREP program.	92	92	$500,000	38
Holding[d] Power	Allocates funding to strengthen existing holding power efforts or develop new programs.	--	65	$3 million in tax-levy funds	14

[a] The Division of High Schools also funded three high schools' A.I./D.P. positions associated with Project Connect, a pilot program designed to help at-risk eighth graders "connect" with their present schools and with the high schools they would attend in the fall. Project Connect was evaluated by the Office of Educational Assessment/ Student Progress Evaluation Unit.

[b] Schools receiving funding for a component in fall, 1984 are included in the count of schools receiving funding in spring, 1985.

[c] Project SOAR was implemented during spring, 1985.

[d] The Holding Power component was tax-levy funded. Sixty-five schools are listed as receiving funding in both the fall and in the spring even though some borough superintendents may have allocated funding to schools only in the fall or only in the spring.

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coordinators* and school administrators at 40 sample schools during the spring term.

NEW PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Intake/Transition

The Intake/Transition (I/T) component was one of three new components developed by the Division of High Schools to serve the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school. The component provided the services of at least one full-time guidance counselor and one family assistant to those schools with a large population of "over the counter"** and/or "post-PREP"*** students. Thirty-five schools received the component in fall, 1984 and an additional four schools received the component in spring, 1985. A few of the schools in the sample had more than one I/T counselor. The component

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* In most cases, each A.I./D.P. component at a school was under the supervision of a coordinator who was responsible for various aspects of component implementation and operation, such as interpretation of program guidelines, coordination of component staff efforts, and administrative tasks. A coordinator was typically a guidance counselor or teacher who had received some on-site training in component operation by school or A.I./D.P. program administrators. In some cases, the "coordinator" referred to in the material below was actually a component staff member such as the Intake/Transition counselor.

** An over-the-counter student is one who enters school without the records or test results needed for proper programming. Typically, these are students who did not attend New York City public schools the previous year (many of whom have recently arrived in the country); or who attended a New York City public school but who did not have complete citywide test data; or whose records were not forwarded to the high school from a feeder school.

*** The PREP (Preparation for Raising Educational Performance) program provided theme-based instruction for ninth-grade students who were two or more years below grade level in reading or mathematics in 1983-84, and also provided reduced class size for PREP students who were four or more years below grade level. A post-PREP student is one who is no longer participating in the PREP program but who might require on-going academic and counseling assistance.

was operational in all but a few of these schools by the end of September, although not all of the guidance counselors or family workers in these schools had been hired by the time school began. This late start meant that the I/T counselors were delayed in providing intake and programming services to the student populations they were serving.

Counselors' Duties. Intake/Transition counselors' duties fell into four general categories: intake, programming, followup (including counseling), and administration. Intake duties involved such tasks as obtaining students' records from feeder schools, informing feeder schools of special programs available at the high school, interviewing high-risk students (and sometimes their parents) to determine their program interests and needs, and acting as the liaison with other staff members in the high school. The scope of these duties varied from school to school. For example, the I/T counselor at Erasmus Hall High School conducted 171 intake interviews and suggested special programming for 139 students. The I/T counselor at Prospect Heights High School handled 95 over-the-counter admissions and 35 truants applying for readmission, while at William Cullen High School, 209 over-the-counter admissions were received by the I/T counselor but only 15 students were identified as meeting the A.I./D.P. eligibility criteria.

Intake/Transition counselors' programming tasks could involve referring a student to a special program such as Operation Success, Project SOAR, or Career Opportunities for Brooklyn Youth (COBY); arranging speakers or "career trips" for classes of high-risk students; acting as liaison with community service agencies; setting up parent/teacher workshops; or arranging for mentoring or tutorial assistance. Follow-up frequently included individual and group counseling; parental contact, both in-school and at

home; monitoring of students' attendance; and writing congratulatory letters to students who were performing well. At Samuel J. Tilden High School, for example, each high-risk student participated in three large and two small group counseling sessions a week. Thirty group counseling sessions lasting about 30 minutes each were held at Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School, while the Intake/Transition counselor at Walton High School indicated that he held two group counseling sessions and 55 individual counseling sessions weekly.

Finally, approximately five to ten percent of each I/T counselor's time was devoted to administrative duties such as initial organization of the component, conferring with other staff members regarding the students being served, attending staff development meetings and workshops, and recordkeeping.

Counselors indicated that they served a wide variety of students, including ninth-graders, tenth-graders, and a few eleventh- and twelfth-graders. More over-the-counter than post-PREP students were served, and the numbers remained fairly constant during both terms.

Family Workers' Duties. Each Intake/Transition counselor was aided by a full-time family worker who performed such functions as monitoring attendance and following up on absences and long term absentees (L.T.A.s); calling, writing, or visiting students' homes to notify parents of their child's truancy or academic failure; performing various kinds of clerical services such as scheduling appointments for parents with the Intake/Transition counselor; and taking high-risk students to appointments with social welfare agencies. A few of these family workers were bilingual and helped the I/T counselor communicate with Spanish-speaking students and their parents.

Extracurricular

The purpose of the Extracurricular component was to improve the attendance and retention of high-risk ninth-graders (including repeaters) by providing high interest after-school activities. In order to provide positive role models for the high-risk students, all ninth-grade students in the schools receiving the component were allowed to participate in the program.

D.H.S. allocated funding to 44 schools to establish the Extracurricular component beginning in the fall, 1984 term. Forty-five percent of the schools began their program early in the fall. However, about 25 percent of the schools receiving funding for the component did not implement an Extracurricular program until midway through the fall term (usually because it took some time to find staff members to plan and run the after-school activities) and another 30 percent did not start their program until the spring. In the latter case, the delay was usually the result of the principal's decision to offer a more concentrated program in the spring.

Component guidelines stipulated that the extracurricular activities were to be selected based on an assessment of the school's facilities, the staff's specialized interests, and an assessment of high-risk students' interests solicited through an interest survey. Program coordinators indicated that about one-half of the activities offered to students were the result of the interest survey, while the other one-half were determined on the basis of staff availability, interests, and skills.

Overall, twenty-six different activities were offered to students during the fall term; 17 additional activities were offered in spring, 1985. During the fall term, nearly 50 percent of these activities were organized sports,

20 percent were in the area of the arts, and 30 percent were clubs and activities such as driver's education, cooking, and ethnic studies. In the spring, organized sports represented only one-third of all activities, while arts activities increased to 27 percent, and clubs and miscellaneous activities increased to 40 percent of the total. Coordinators gave various reasons for these shifts, including the greater number and variety of activities available to the students in the spring, and coordinators' perception that sports activities were not effective in improving students' attendance, achievement, or attitude toward school.

Scheduling varied, depending on the nature of the activity and the number of students interested in participating. At Erasmus Hall, for example, the journalism, ethnic studies, and arts and crafts activities were scheduled for one hour a week, the computer class was offered for two hours a week, and the photography club met for two hours every other week. At Franklin K. Lane, by contrast, the program was scheduled for six weeks during the spring and took place four afternoons a week.

The number and type of students served by the Extracurricular component also varied. The sample schools indicated that they had served an average of 80 students. In most cases, about 80 percent of these students were ninth graders, and 20 percent were tenth graders. However, a number of the schools indicated that they had served eleventh and twelfth graders as well, and at Franklin K. Lane High School, these upperclassmen represented more than 40 percent of the component students. One coordinator commented that "no child was denied access to the component because of their grade level."

Project SOAR

SOAR is an acronym for Student Opportunity, Achievement, and Retention, and identifies a program of intensive remediation and supportive services for a selected population of overage tenth-graders who did not technically earn enough credits to be promoted from the ninth to the tenth grade. D.H.S. developed the component using funds originally allocated for other program activities, plus funds reallocated from the Operation Success component. This component was implemented in February, 1985 in nine schools. Implementation was preceded by a training session for SOAR staff led by central Board personnel. Staff development activities were continued throughout the spring term.

Project SOAR guidelines stipulated that each school form "family" groups of 20 students each which were programmed for double periods in interdisciplinary classes. In addition, each school was required to form a support team consisting of a guidance counselor, one social worker or two school neighborhood workers, and at least one paraprofessional.

The nine schools receiving the component followed the specified guidelines closely, but with some variations reflecting the needs of the populations being served and the staff resources available. For example, all of the SOAR schools except Bronx Regional, an alternative school, had a guidance counselor working full time with SOAR students. None of the schools had a social worker working with the SOAR students, but most of them had at least one family assistant or neighborhood worker to monitor attendance and contact students' homes.

Eight of the nine schools placed their selected SOAR students into four blocks of approximately 20 students each, while Bronx Regional, which had a

smaller student population, served about 50 students overall. Most of the schools scheduled a double period of English/reading, although George Washington and Newtown high schools -- two schools with large limited English proficient (LEP) populations -- scheduled two periods of E.S.L. instead. The majority of the schools also provided one period of career exploration or work experience and one tutorial period. Several schools scheduled double periods combining mathematics with a science or business skills course and/or blocked the students by section. A few schools had special features in their SOAR program. Evander Childs High School, for example, based instruction for SOAR students on the theme of Careers in Athletics, Sports, and Health Servives (CASH), while Prospect Heights awarded SOAR students extra credit for participation in an after-school science program. Bronx Regional provided every student with one period of career exploration plus three classes in the areas of accounting, computers, and/or typing.

Only four of the schools reported problems in implementing the component. The coordinator at Bronx Regional High School said that the family worker for the program had been hired "late," and the coordinator at Evander Childs commented that scheduling for students with after-school jobs had been somewhat complicated. Coordinators at John Jay and Newtown high schools complained of late notification and funding. The coordinator at John Jay also felt that staff training was inadequate, and the coordinator at Newtown said that more money should have been provided for supplementary educational materials.

PREVIOUSLY EXISTING COMPONENTS

Operation Success

Operation Success is a work-readiness and experience program aimed

primarily at high-risk students who are overage for their grade and have not accumulated enough academic credits to graduate. The program is administered by Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS), a private not-for-profit human services agency specializing in vocational counseling and training, in cooperation with the New York City Board of Education, the Division of High Schools, and the United Federation of Teachers.

Operation Success was made part of the A.I./D.P. program during the 1984-85 school year, and six more schools became Operation Success schools. Grace Dodge, James Monroe, and Theodore Roosevelt High Schools were added to the set of target sites in fall, 1984 and DeWitt Clinton, South Bronx, and William Taft High Schools were added in spring, 1985. Each school was staffed with FEGS personnel to provide testing, counseling, and referrals. During this school year, about one-half of the FEGS case managers and secretaries in 10 of the 11 Operation Success schools were replaced by school staff members, most of whom were guidance counselors or former teachers. (The exception was Erasmus Hall High School, which was a demonstration site for FEGS and retained an all-FEGS staff.) Staffing changes were largely due to changes in the definition of responsibilities among the collaborating agencies. Case managers had primary responsibility for ongoing individual counseling and home contact, while the remaining FEGS staff members assumed responsibility for making referrals to community services and for arranging vocational testing, skills training, and educational internships.

Operation Success coordinators reported that a wide variety of guidance and career services were provided to Operation Success students. Most guidance activities involved personal and vocational counseling. Staff acti-

vities also included training students in decision-making, follow-up monitoring at work sites, arranging field trips to businesses and speakers from different career areas, and making referrals to alternative educational placements such as the General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) program. Family support efforts undertaken by case managers included telephone calls to parents, home visits, and referrals to the FEGS community resources specialist, who in turn referred both students and parents to community service agencies such as hospitals, legal services, Planned Parenthood, and Catholic Charities.

In contrast, FEGS personnel arranged vocational aptitude testing either on site at the school or at the FEGS facility on West 14th Street in Manhattan. They also arranged skills training in such areas as air conditioning and refrigeration repair, building maintenance, and jewelry making. This training was provided at the West 14th Street center for one half-day periods. Educational internship placements were made in a wide variety of private companies and in institutions such as hospitals and police precincts. In some cases, pupils with particularly bad attendance records were given placements within the school to help them develop the habit of attending school. Internship students worked for a two-hour period after school, usually for three days a week, and received school credit plus a small stipend for their efforts.

Living for the Young Family Through Education (LYFE)

This A.I./D.P. component served a special group of students: teenage mothers who wished to remain in high school but who could not do so without free day care for their young children. Although the Infant/Toddler Care Program (of which LYFE is a part) provides both educational and social services to teenage mothers at over 20 sites, A.I./D.P. funding was used to

support operations at only six LYFE sites.

In order to receive LYFE services, students were required to obtain parental consent, be of high school age and enrolled in a high school setting, and have an infant from two months to two years of age. Most day care centers could accommodate only 20 children at one time, so enrollments in the program were theoretically limited to this level. The average number of LYFE students enrolled per school in the sample was 16.

The child care centers were physically located in the schools in most cases, although in a few instances, childcare was provided in homes nearby the students' schools. Each school's childcare center was under the direction of an early childhood teacher, with actual childcare provided by three or four paraprofessionals. Each center provided a comprehensive day care program for the children, including developmental evaluation and a developmental curriculum tailored to the individual child. In addition to supervising the child care paraprofessionals and the overall operation of the day care center, some early childhood teachers taught a parenting class which LYFE mothers were required to attend.

Most LYFE programs also had the services of a social worker to provide individual and group counseling, monitor attendance and grades, make home visits, make referrals to medical and social agencies or other alternative educational options, and help students strengthen their goal-setting skills.

New York City Mentoring Project

The Mentoring component of the A.I./D.P. program was part of the New York City Mentoring Project, which was begun at nine sites during the fall term and was later expanded to other sites. Mentoring services were pro-provided to A.I./D.P. students at a total of six sites during the fall and

at 13 sites during the spring.

The Mentoring component established a one-to-one relationship between a high-risk youngster and an adult from outside the school environment. The purpose of this relationhsip was to provide the youngster with enrichment opportunities in one or more of five "focus" areas: 1) private citizens as adult role models, 2) career exploration and advisement, 3) academic assistance and skills building, 4) world of work awareness, and 5) cultural and social enrichment.

High-risk students participating in the A.I./D.P. Mentoring component were usually selected by a school-based Mentoring planning team. This team was composed of the Mentoring component coordinator, a guidance counselor and/or the assistant principal for guidance, and others. Most of these students were ninth- and tenth-graders who had good academic or career potential but were not living up to that potential. The number of students included at each Mentoring site was typically 15 or less.

Mentors were volunteers from nearby colleges or from organizations such as New York School Volunteers. They received training for this work either at their institution or at a workshop sponsored by the New York City Mentoring Project.

Mentors and targeted students typically met once a week after school for an hour or more. Mentors from colleges focused both on academic affairs and on various types of cultural enrichment activities, such as field trips to museums, Broadway shows, or their colleges. Mentors from other organizations focused more on career orientation and student self-awareness activities.

TELSOL

TELSOL is an automated telephone dialing system which can be programmed to call students' homes with a variety of messages and in a variety of languages, and to record the responses of the person answering the telephone. An operator programs the messages, transcribes responses, and matches these responses to the correct telephone number.

TELSOL machines were in place in a number of schools prior to the 1984-85 school year. The $2.5 million in A.I./D.P. funds allocated to this component were used to purchase TELSOL units for schools that did not previously have one or that needed an additional unit to serve their large student population, and to pay the salaries of paraprofessionals hired to monitor the units. Ninety-two schools received A.I./D.P. funding for this purpose in 1984-85, with most of the units and operators functional early in the fall term. In most cases, the TELSOL operation was supervised by a coordinator -- often, the assistant principal of guidance. Coordinators' duties typcially included supervising the TELSOL operator, preparing messages to be programmed, supplying the telephone numbers to be called, and maintaining records.

The machines were used for a variety of reasons. Coordinators cited calls related to attendance and absences as the single most frequent use of the TELSOL equipment. General notification and reminders, such as announcement of an upcoming P.T.A. meeting came next, followed by "positive" messages such as news that the student had recently won an award. Other uses included notification that report cards were being issued, "wake-up" calls, and efforts to reach L.T.A.s and dropouts.

Absentees and students who came to school but then cut one or more classes ("cutters") were the most frequently called students, followed by students in special programs such as PREP and SOAR. Among high-risk students, absentees and cutters were again at the top of the list, followed by students who were failing or had already failed a subject.

The TELSOL machines were heavily used. The average number of calls per week ranged from 100 to 6,000; the overall average was about 1,260 calls per week. Sixty percent of the calls were in English, and nearly 28 percent were in Spanish; other languages used included French-Creole, Greek, Italian, and Chinese. Most calls were made from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and on weekends, when parents were most likely to be at home.

PREP Staff Development

In contrast to the other A.I./D.P. components, PREP Staff Development did not provide services directly to students. Instead, the component provided training to teachers, guiance counselors, and school administrators working with the PREP program. Some PREP staff development activities had taken place in 1983-84, the first year that the PREP program was implemented in the schools. However, these staff development activities were considerably augmented with the help of A.I./D.P. funds in 1984-85. Ninety-two schools received funding for PREP Staff Development training during this year; the total A.I./D.P. budget allocated for this purpose was $500,000, and was used primarily for per session payents for PREP staff members and school administrators participating in the training.

PREP staff training had been scheduled to start in the fall, following a needs assessment in October. However, many of the schools (31 out of 38

in the sample) did not conduct their needs assessments until late in the fall or early in the spring. Therefore training sessions were scheduled as schools identified their needs.

Staff development training sessions occurred both centrally and at the inidividual school sites. On-site training was usually the responsibility of the school's PREP program coordinator or supervisor, and included discussion of topics such as effective teaching strategies in a theme-based curriculum, discipline and attendance problems among PREP students, and the role of parental involvement. The average number of on-site staff development training sessions during both the fall, 1984 and spring, 1985 terms was four. About 50 percent of these sessions were held after school, and about 70 percent of the sessions ran for one hour or less.

Less than one-half of the schools receiving the PREP Staff Development component sent a representative to central training sessions during the fall term while all of the schools sent at least one representative to a central training session during the spring term. The average number of sessions attended was three. About 70 percent of the central sessions were held after school hours, and nearly 90 percent of them ran for two hours or more. About 60 percent of the central sessions in both the fall and spring were led by the PREP program director or other staff from the central board; other meetings were led by PREP or guidance personnel from the schools, or by "outside" trainers such as the regional PREP coordinator. Topics discussed were similar to those covered in school on-site sessions, although in the fall considerable attention was given to administrative problems. Guidance and "general coping" problems were given much greater attention in the spring.

Holding Power

The Holding Power component of A.I./D.P. differed from the other components in two important ways: 1) it was funded by tax-levy rather than state monies, and 2) D.H.S. allocated the funds to borough superintendents rather than directly to the schools. Borough superintendents then distributed the funds to the schools in their borough as they saw fit.

The schools used their holding power allocations in a variety of ways. About 60 percent of the funds were used to provide smaller classes for students or for per session payments for staff development meetings. Roughly 20 percent were used for special programs such as PREP or G.E.D. training while the rest were used for a variety of purposes including before-school tutoring, administration of a student interest survey, and partial underwriting of the salary of a Spanish-speaking family worker to monitor the attendance of high-risk students. Few schools changed the focus of their holding power activities from fall to spring.

III. STAFF PERCEPTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

In addtion to providing information on the functioning of the components with which they worked, component coordinators rated the effectiveness of their own component in improving students' attendance, achievement, and attitudes toward school. As an analysis of the outcome data presented in Chapter IV will indicate, coordinators' perceptions of the effect of their components on students' attendance, achievement, and attitudes were considerably more positive than warranted by examination of outcome data. Despite this discrepancy, coordinators' perceptions are reported here because they provide some sense of the enthusiasm with which staff approached this program for high-risk students. Given students' past histories of poor attendance and academic failure, improvement in these areas may have been an unrealistc expectation in the first year of program implementation.

PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The majority of coordinators believed that their components had had a positive impact on program objectives, particularly in the area of students' attitudes toward school. A number of coordinators also believed that students' attendance had improved as a result of component services. However, only the Project SOAR, Intake/Transition, and Mentoring coordinators believed that their component had had a significant impact on students' academic achievement.

Coordinators felt that the close personal attention given to the students by program personnel was as an important element in students' improved attendance, achievement, and attitudes toward school. Mentoring coordinators, for example, mentioned their students' "sense of importance at being chosen"

for this component's services, and a number of Intake/Transition counselors said that the counselors' "basic concern for the students" was a very important element in the success of the component. The counseling and guidance aspects of Project SOAR, Operation Success, and LYFE Day Care were similarly seen by coordinators and school administrators as having a positive overall effect on students' attendance, achievement, and attitudes.

Unique elements in particular components were also cited by coordinators as especially helpful in improving students' performance. Project SOAR coordinators felt that the "cohesiveness" provided by small classes and block programming were key factors in the component's success, while Operation Success coordinators cited the skills training and educational internships available to their students as central to the component's effectiveness. TELSOL coordinators felt that the ability of the system to call a broad range of students with a variety of messages during periods other than school hours made the system beneficial to the whole school, and virtually all of the PREP Staff Development coordinators rated the on-site training that they had received as "extremely" or "very" useful in working with high-risk students. (About one-half found the central training sessions extremely or very useful, while over two-fifths found them of "average" usefulness.) Finally, one of the early childhood teachers in the LYFE Day Care component stated unequivocally that "without the free daycare provided for their children, none of these students could have returned to or succeeded in school."

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM CHANGES

Nevertheless, most of the component coordinators also had suggestions for ways in which the component might be made even more efficient. The most

commonly suggested improvements were earlier notification of funding to improve planning and increased staffing to enhance component effectiveness. Other suggestions are summarized below by component.

Intake/Transition

- Give counselors greater authority in program design and use of funds.
- Provide intake/transition services to students in the lower grades, before truancy becomes "ingrained."
- Increase the use of incentive awards and prizes to motivate students to attend school.

Extracurricular

- If funding permits, expand enrichment activities.
- Facilitate "inter-school communication" so that staff members can learn of techniques in running Extracurricular programs that have worked well elsewhere.
- Provide a better student interest survey instrument.
- Support greater involvement of parents in the program.

Project SOAR

- Provide clearer guidelines for component operation.
- Give coordinators more release time from class to carry out their SOAR coordination duties.
- Provide better staff training.
- Make the program ongoing because "it is a program of recapture which needs to be worked out over a period of time."

Operation Success

- Improve articulation between school staff members, on-site FEGS staff, and FEGS headquarters.
- Make Operation Success services available to younger students.

LYFE Day Care

- Provide transportation services to bring students and their children to and from school.
- Train family workers before they begin working with students and community-based support agencies.
- Encourage greater involvement of children's fathers in the program.

Mentoring

- Give the schools more input in selecting mentors.
- Give students academic credit for participation in the program, or let them participate in the program in lieu of a class.
- Encourage outreach to teachers to make them more aware of the program.

TELSOL

- Connect the TELSOL equipment with the computerized attendance data base [University Application Processing Center (U.A.P.C.)] to facilitate immediate response to absentees and cutters.
- Find a more efficient way to update students' telephone numbers.

Holding Power

- Extend holding power efforts to students in the lower grades.

PREP Staff Development

- Schedule more time for staff development meetings.
- Provide a "followup" to the PREP program.
- Extend the staff development component to all teachers.

IV. STUDENT OUTCOMES

DATA SOURCES

O.E.A./H.S.E.U. collected data from two sources to identify the target population eligible for and served by the A.I./D.P. program. School administrators completed High Risk Rosters which included 1984-85 attendance and achievement data for students meeting the eligibility criteria specified in High School Memorandum #123. Component coordinators used rosters to identify students receiving services in the A.I./D.P. components during both the fall and spring terms.*

Merging these files generated 30,172 unduplicated student records. Of these records:

- Twenty percent (6,000) had attendance and achievement data but were not listed on any of the component rosters.** Because none of these students' appeared as having participated in component activities, the evaluation team did not identify them as having received program services. This decision reduced the number of students receiving program services from 30,172 to 24,172.

- Forty-six percent (13,848) had component information only, indicating that school administrators did not identify these students as meeting Memorandum #123 criteria. Many of these students were served in components with expanded eligibility criteria, such as Intake/Transition and Extracurricular.

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* The evaluation team decided not to collect data for students receiving TELSOL services because these units served the entire school rather than only high-risk students. In addition, the sample contains no student outcome data related to the PREP Staff Development Component because this component did not provide direct services to students.

** This loss may have been partially a result of the fact that about 15 percent of the coordinators did not return component rosters to the O.E.A./H.S.E.U.

- Thus, only 34 percent (10,234) of the records contained both component and high risk information. Of these records, 6,565 had complete attendance information and 4,649 had complete achievement data for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Although the data loss was considerable, most of the loss occurred because students other than those designated as high-risk according to Memorandum #123 were participating in program activities. Other reasons for incomplete data relate to the difficulty that school personnel may have had in locating the necessary records. Attendance and achievement data may reside on students' permanent record cards, in roll books, and on report cards. The incompleteness of these records, particularly in the case of over-the-counter students who arrive without the necessary records, may be responsible for the data loss reported for program participants. The fact that records were scattered in many places because students were not taking part in a self-contained program with coordinated services may also account for some of the missing data.

Thus, the data analyses discussed below relate only to the Intake/Transition, Extracurricular, Project SOAR, Operation Success, Mentoring, and Holding Power components of the 1984-85 A.I./D.P. program.* The percentage of students with complete attendance and achievement data is listed by component in Appendix A.

OUTCOMES FOR COMPLETE SAMPLE

Breakdown of Sample by Eligibility Criteria

To clarify the characteristics of the sample, the evaluation team

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* Data for students receiving services from the LYFE component were eliminated from the analysis because the number of students with complete data was too small.

grouped students with complete 1983-84 attendance data into categories based on whether they met the truancy criteria specified in Memorandum #123, were PREP or special education students, or met other eligibility criteria. This crosstabulation is shown in Table 1. Of the 6,653 students for whom complete 1983-84 attendance data were available:

- One-half met the truancy and academic failure criteria specified in Memorandum #123.
- About 45 percent did not meet the Memorandum #123 criteria but did receive services from either the Extracurricular, Intake/Transition, and/or Holding Power components. Each of these components had broadened eligibility criteria for program services which stated that all over-the-counter nor incoming ninth-graders were eligible.
- Only three percent of the students included in this analysis did not meet either the truancy criteria specified in Memorandum #123 or the broadened eligibility criteria. These students received services from the Mentoring, Operation Success, or Project SOAR components.

Breakdown of Students by Component

A crosstabulation of the percentage of sample students participating in each component by grade is presented in Table 2. Percentages in Table 2 are based on the total number of students in each component. Since approximately 15 percent of the students participated in more than one component, comparisons cannot be made within grade level. Of the 6,653 students comprising the sample, 84 percent (5,582) had valid grade codes allowing them to be included in this analysis. As shown in Table 2:

- Over two-thirds of these students were ninth-graders, more than one-fourth were tenth-graders, and about four percent were in the eleventh and twelfth grades.
- Over four-fifths of the Operation Success students were enrolled in grades nine and ten.
- The Intake/Transition and Holding Power components, both of which had expanded eligibility criteria, served the largest number of students.

TABLE 1

Number and Percentage of A.I./D.P. Student Sample in Various Eligibility Categories

Eligibility Categories[a]	N	Relative Percent
Memorandum #123[b]	3,327	50.0%
Component Eligibility[c]	2,974	44.7
Other Served Students	210	3.2
PREP	106	1.6
Special Education	36	0.5
TOTAL	6,653	100.0

[a] These categories are mutually exclusive.

[b] Memorandum #123 stated a truancy criterion (absent 25 days or more in the spring, 1984 term or absent 50 days or more for the 1983-84 school year) and an academic failure criterion (low-reading achievement, courses failed, overage, or limited English proficiency).

[c] Students served by the Holding Power and/or Extracurricular, and/or Intake-Transition components were eligible for program services based on their participation in these components (see text for more complete explanation).

- One-half of the students with complete data were eligible according to Memorandum #123.
- Only three percent of the students did not meet any of the eligibility requirements.

TABLE 2

Number and Percentage[a] of A.I./D.P. Student Sample by Grade and Component Participation

			COMPONENTS[b]											
			Mentoring		Holding Power		Extra-curricular		Intake Transition		Operation Success		Project Soar	
Grade	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ninth	3,774	68%	54	68%	1,644	71%	324	89%	2,119	68%	181	43%	159	93%
Tenth	1,634	29	23	29	590	25	38	10	958	31	178	42	12	7
Eleventh	143	3	1	1	79	3	1	1	9	--	54	13	0	0
Twelfth	31	1	1	1	15	1	0	0	4	--	12	3	0	0
TOTAL	5,582[c]	101	79	99	2,328	100	363	100	3,090	99	425	101	171	100

[a] Percentages are based on in the total number of students in each component. Students may have participated in more than one component.

[b] Data for students receiving services from the LYFE component were eliminated from the analyses because the number of students with complete data was too small.

[c] The component participation for 1,071 students was not reported because they did not have valid grade information.

- Except for Operation Success, at least two-thirds of the students participating in each component were in the ninth grade.
- Over four-fifths of the students participating in Operation Success were in grades nine and ten.

These data represent only those students who had complete 1983-84 attendance data and valid grade codes. The findings reported here may not be generalizable to all participating students.

Attendance Outcomes

The attendance objective was measured by comparing students' 1983-84 and 1984-85 mean attendance rates. An effect size (E.S.)* indicating the educational meaningfulness of the mean gain or loss for each comparison was also calculated. A comparison of students' attendance by the number of days they were absent in 1983-84 is presented in Table 3. As shown in this table:

- Overall, students' attendance remained essentially the same (E.S. = -.16).
- The attendance rate of students who were absent 50 or more days in 1983-84 (those most in need of program services) improved five percentage points, from 53.9 percent to 58.9 percent. The effect size of this change (E.S. = .21) indicates a small gain in mean attendance.

Achievement Outcomes

Student achievement was measured by comparing the percentage of courses passed during 1983-84 and the program year. The analyses included a breakdown of achievement rates in relation to attendance rates during the 1983-84 school year. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 4. As shown in the table:

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* The effect size, developed by Jacob Cohen, is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gain. This ratio provides an index of improvement in standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. According to Cohen, 0.2 is a small E.S., 0.5 is a moderate E.S., and 0.8 is considered to be a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered to be educationally meaningful.

Table 3

Comparison of Attendance Rates By 1983-84 Absences

Time Period	N[a]	ATTENDANCE (IN PERCENT) Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size[b]
All Students						
1983-84	6,567	80.3	19.2	-2.9	1.7	-.16
1984-85		77.4	20.9			
Students Absent in 1983-84:						
Between 0 - 24 Days						
1983-84	3,284	93.4	4.8	-5.8	8.9	--
1984-85		87.6	13.7			
Between 25 and 49 Days						
1983-84	1,642	80.5	7.6	-5.1	10.0	--
1984-85		75.4	17.6			
Over 50 Days						
1983-84	1,641	53.9	18.2	5.0	4.4	.21
		58.9	22.6			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

[b] Effect size was computed only for groups with homogeneous standard deviations (S.D.) for 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Overall, students' percentage attendance remained essentially unchanged from the pre-project (1983-84) to the project (1984-85) year.
- Students with the most 1983-84 absences showed a small mean gain (five percent) in attendance.

Table 4

Comparison of the Percentage of Courses Passed By 1983-84 Absences

Time Period	N[a]	ATTENDANCE (IN PERCENT) Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
All Students[b]						
1983-84	4,678	68.9	42.9	-18.2	7.7	-.42
1984-85		50.7	35.2			
Students Absent in 1983-84:						
Between 0 - 24 Days						
1983-84	2,206	84.8	34.6	-20.6	2.5	-.52
1984-85		64.2	32.1			
Between 25 and 49 Days						
1983-84	1,070	65.1	34.0	-23.6	1.5	-.59
1984-85		41.5	32.5			
Over 50 Days						
1983-84	1,014	35.4	42.8	-4.9	10.4	-.10
1984-85		30.5	32.4			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

[b] The total number of students (4,678) is greater than the sum of students in the three comparisons because the first comparison includes students with complete course information irrespective of whether attendance data were complete.

- The percentage of courses passed of all students except those with the poorest attendance, declined moderately from 1983-84 to 1984-85.

- Overall, students' achievement showed a small (E.S.=-.42) decline from 68.9 percent to 50.7 percent from 1983-84 to 1984-85.

- Students with the fewest days absent in 1983-84 had the highest achievement rate for both the preceding year and the program year. Conversely, students with the most absences in 1983-84 had the lowest achievement rate during both years.

- Students absent fewer than 25 days and those absent between 25 and 49 days in 1983-84 both passed about 20 percent fewer courses (moderate effect sizes of -.52 and -.59, respectively) during the program year than the preceding year.

- Students with the lowest attendance rate in 1983-84 passed about the same number of courses (E.S. = -.10) as they did in the previous year.

One explanation for the drop in achievement from the preceding year to the program year is that many of the students receiving program services were incoming ninth-graders who may have had considerable difficulty in adjusting to and coping with high school work. Different grading policies may also have contributed to this decline in achievement. In addition, many A.I./D.P. program components were not fully functional until late fall, 1984 or early spring, 1985.

In order to assess the impact of these factors, the evaluation team compared achievement levels (for students for whom complete 1983-84 and 1984-85 achievement data were available) for three time periods: 1983-84 to 1984-85; 1983-84 to fall, 1984; and fall, 1984 to spring, 1985. These analyses are summarized in Table 5. As shown in this table:

- Achievement levels showed small declines (E.S. = -.37) between the preceding year and the first term of the program year.

- Achievement levels remained essentially the same (E.S. -.06) from fall, 1984 to spring, 1985.

TABLE 5

Comparison of the Percentage of Courses Passed
At Three Points in Time

Time Period	PERCENTAGE OF COURSES PASSED					
	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	4,649	69.1	42.9	-18.2	7.8	-.42
1984-85		50.9	35.1			
1983-84	4,649	69.1	42.9	-16.7	4.3	-.37
Fall, 1984		52.4	38.6			
Fall, 1984	4,649	52.4	38.6	- 2.0	2.2	-.06
Spring, 1985		50.4	40.8			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid achievement information for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Overall, the percentage of courses passed by A.I./D.P. participants decreased moderately from 1983-84 to 1984-85 and from 1983-84 to fall, 1984. This indicates that they had greater difficulty meeting the requirements of the high school than the junior high school curriculum.

- Program students passed about the same percentage of courses (E.S. = -.06) in spring, 1985 as they did in fall, 1984.

These results substantially support the interpretation that the transition to senior high school, as well as high school grading policies, influenced student achievement. The decline in achievement from 1983-84 to fall, 1984 stabilized during the spring, 1985 term, as program components became fully operational and as students adjusted to their high school environment. A rival hypothesis for these findings, which emerged in interviews with program staff, is that the achievement rates of these students in 1983-84, when there were potential middle-school graduates, may have been inflated by liberal grading policies.

OUTCOMES BY INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

In order to begin to assess the differential impact of particular components on students' attendance and achievement, the evaluation team analyzed student outcomes in the six components for which appropriate data were available. The results of these analyses are presented in Tables B-1 to B-6 in Appendix B and are summarized below.

Comparison of Six Components*

Attendance.

- Students participating in the Extracurricular component had the highest overall attendance (relative to the students participating in the other components) for both 1983-84 (89.5 percent) and 1984-85 (87.3 percent).** This higher attendance rate is probably related to the fact that component participation was not limited to high-risk students.
- Students participating in the Operation Success component had the lowest overall attendance rates both in 1983-84 (76.6 percent) and in 1984-85 (71.1 percent). They also posted the greatest

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* Students may have been served by more than one component.

** Project SOAR students are not included in this comparison.

drop in attendance (4.9 points) from 1983-84 to 1984-85. These low attendance rates may be a function of the fact that many of these students were overage for their grade and not strongly motivated to attend class. Their attendance at work sites, which was not monitored by the schools, may have been better than their class attendance. Subsequent evaluations should measure job site attendance.

- The attendance of the students served by Project SOAR improved from fall to spring while the attendance of the students served by the other five components dropped slightly during that period. This suggests that Project SOAR, which was not implemented until the spring, 1985 term, had a strong positive impact on these high-risk students. This is particularly impressive in light of the fact that analyses of Chapter I/P.S.E.N. attendance data have shown that attendance of high-risk students usually declines during the spring term.

Achievement.

- Of the six components included in the analyses, students participating in the Mentoring component had the highest average percentage of courses passed (84.2 percent) during the 1983-84 school year. Students participating in the Intake/Transition, Holding Power, and Extracurricular components (e.g., the three components with broadened eligibility criteria) also had relatively high achievement levels (combined average 74 percent) during the 1983-84 school year, while the students that were served by the Operation Success and Project SOAR components had 1983-84 achievement levels below 50 percent.

- The percentage of courses passed by students in the five components with a full year program (Intake/Transition, Extracurricular, Operation Success, Holding Power, and Mentoring) dropped from 1983-84 to 1984-85. Most of this decline occurred during the first semester of the project year, with achievement stabilizing during the second semester. This drop in achievement can be attributed to the several factors previously discussed.

- Students in the Project SOAR component posted a meaningful increase (20.2 percent) in achievement from fall, 1984 to spring, 1985, while students in the other five components had a slight drop in achievement (combined average -4.6 points).

Attitudes Toward School. One expected outcome of the A.I./D.P. program was an increase in participants' positive feelings toward school and schooling. The School Attitude Measure (SAM), a norm-referenced self-report survey

published in 1980 by Scott, Foresman and Company, was used to assess students' responses to their school experience. The SAM for high school students consists of a series of simple statements (100 items) about school life with a four-point scaled response (never agree, sometimes agree, usually agree, always agree). The items are evenly distributed among five dimensions: 1) motivation for schooling -- that is, the effect of past school experience on the students' desire to pursue schooling; 2) academic self-concept, performance-based -- that is, students' confidence in their academic abilities and their feelings about school performance; 3) academic self-concept, referenced-based -- that is, how students think other people (teachers, family, friends) feel about their school performance and ability to succeed academically; 4) students' sense of control over performance -- that is, their feelings about being able to exercise control over situations that affect them at school and to take responsibility for the outcome of relevant school events (grades, promotion, etc.); and 5) students' instructional mastery -- that is, their evaluation of the state of their actual school skills.

The survey was administered to 453 Project SOAR students in February, 1985 (the pretest) and 363 students in June, 1985 (the posttest). Of these students, 280 (62 percent) had complete pretest and posttest results. The results are summarized in Table 6, and included the following:

- Project SOAR students improved their attitudes toward school by at least two Normal Curve Equivalent (N.C.E.) units* on each scale from the pretest to the posttest.

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* Normal Curve Equivalent scores are similar to percentile ranks, but unlike percentile ranks, are based on an equal-interval scale. N.C.E. scores are based on a scale ranging from 1 to 99 with a mean score of 50 and a standard deviation of approximately 21. Because N.C.E. scores are equally spaced apart, statistical calculations such as averages are meaningful. In addition, comparisons of N.C.E. scores may be made across different achievement tests.

TABLE 6

Changes in Attitudes Toward School in the SAM for Project SOAR Students by Dimension[a]

Dimension	PRE-TEST			POST-TEST			MEAN DIFFERENCE[b]		
	W.R.S.[c]	N.P.	N.C.E.	W.R.S.[c]	N.P.	N.C.E.	W.R.S.[c]	N.P.	N.C.E.
Motivation for Schooling	62.2	56	53	62.8	59	55	0.6	3	2
Academic Self Concept (Performance Based)	54.9	62	56	56.0	66	59	1.1	4	3
Academic Self Concept (Referenced Based)	51.5	57	54	54.1	67	59	2.6	10	5
Student's Sense of Control Over Performance	63.2	53	52	64.1	57	54	0.9	4	2
Student's Instructional Mastery	57.8	58	54	58.8	64	58	1.0	6	4

[a] There were 280 students in this analysis.

[b] All mean differences were statistically significant at the .05 level, except for Motivation for Schooling.

[c] W.R.S. = Weighted Raw Score, N.P. = National Percentile, N.C.E. = Normal Curve Equivalent.

- Mean scores in all dimensions were above the national norm at both pretest and posttest.
- Project SOAR students' positive feelings toward school increased on all dimensions of the School Attitudes Measure (SAM) survey.
- The Largest gains were made in Academic Self-Concept (Referenced Based) and Students' Instructional Mastery.

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- The highest gain was in the area of reference-based academic self-confidence, indicating that the Project SOAR students responded very positively to the focused attention they received in the mini-school environment.

- SOAR students' rating of their academic and instructional skills also improved significantly.

Clearly, these students' attendance, academic achievement, and attitudes toward school were positively affected by their participation in Project SOAR.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The 1984-85 Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention program was a large and complex one, serving over 24,000 students in its first year of operation. These students were served by eight different components during the fall, 1984 term and by one additional component during the spring, 1985 term.

Program objectives had specified that students participating in the program were expected to have higher average attendance and pass more courses than they did in 1983-84. Furthermore, their attitudes toward school and schooling were expected to improve from the beginning to the end of their participation in the program.

The quantitative outcomes reported in Chapter IV of this report revealed that, in most instances, these attendance and achievement objectives were not met. Attendance levels for the sample as a whole remained about the same, while achievement levels declined moderately. However, the attendance levels of students with the worst attendance rate the previous year improved slightly, and their achievement level remained about the same. This indicates that the students with the greatest need were, in fact, helped by program services. Furthermore, the fact that achievement levels for the sample as a whole dropped markedly during the fall, 1984 term and then stabilized during the spring term indicates that many of the students receiving services were new to high school and suggests that they experienced transition difficulties during the first term.

Other positive effects of the program are worth noting. One is that the students served by Project SOAR -- the only component providing an integrated

program of academic remediation and supportive services -- posted significant and meaningful improvements in achievement at the end of the spring term. Since this was the only term during which the component was operational, it is evident that the services received by these students had a significant impact on their achievement. The component also had a positive impact on their attitudes toward school and schooling, as evidenced by gains in the attitude survey administered to these students at the beginning and end of the spring term.

Also encouraging is the fact that many component coordinators believed that the services provided by their component had had a positive impact on students' attitudes toward school and, in some cases, on their attendance and/or achievement. While such subjective judgments are difficult to quantify, they do indicate the experience of the people most clearly associated with the daily operation of the program, and should be taken into account when assessing the impact of the A.I./D.P. program.

Other considerations should also be kept in mind when assessing the effectiveness of the program as a whole or the individual components making up the program.

- This was the first year of program operation. Like all new programs, a certain amount of time was required before each component reached peak implementation. Furthermore, not all components were implemented at the beginning of the school year. These "late starts" would also have affected the components' impact on students' attendance, achievement, and attitudes.

- Each of the components had a different goal and served a different population of students. For example, the Extracurricular component provided after-school activities for any ninth-grade student. It had no academic elements. Thus, student participation in this component would not be expected to influence academic achievement -- one of the major program objectives. This argument is true for every other component except Project SOAR.

- The students targeted for A.I./D.P. services were by definition students who were experiencing difficulties in school attendance and achievement. Many of them were overage for their grade, had a history of academic failure, and were subject to personal, family, or financial pressures that impeded them from attending or doing well in school. It is possible tht without the "treatment" provided by the A.I./D.P. components, these students would have had even lower attendance or achievement rates. Unfortunately, without a control group, it is almost impossible to substantiate this hypothesis.

- Project SOAR was the only component that provided an integrated program of counseling, tutoring, remediation, and block programming, and the only one which had a positive measurable impact on student attendance, achievement, and attitudes. This suggests that future efforts at attendance improvement and dropout prevention should focus more closely on integrated programs serving a limited and sharply defined population of high-risk students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following specific recommendations are made:

- The Division of High Schools should clearly define eligibility criteria, communicate these criteria to the schools in a timely fashion, and develop effective techniques for monitoring compliance.

- The Division of High Schools should develop clear and measurable objectives which are closely related to the design, aims, and population served by each program component.

- The Division of High Schools should consider expanding components which offer an integrated program of instruction, remediation, and supportive services to a clearly defined population of high-risk students.

- Central offices responsible for the program should develop a central data base containing information on a student-by-student basis in order to facilitate program monitoring and evaluation.

- As a consequence of program-induced gains in attendance or achievement, some students may no longer be eligible to receive program services. The Division of High Schools should provide follow-up services to such students to ensure that the gains they have made will be maintained in subsequent years.

APPENDIX A

THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH COMPLETE ATTENDANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA BY COMPONENT

TABLE A-1

Breakdown of the Percentage of Students with Complete Attendance and Achievement Data By Component

Component[a]	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH COMPLETE DATA[b]	
	Attendance	Achievement
Intake/Transition	22	24
Extracurricular	9	11
Project SOAR	25	27
Operation Success	18	19
Mentoring	48	41
Holding Power	20	21

[a] Students may participate in more than one component.

[b] Percentages are based on the population of 24,172.

- The percentage of complete attendance and achievement data ranged from over two-fifths among students participating in the Mentoring component to only one-tenth for Extracurricular students.

APPENDIX B

ATTENDANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Table B-1

Comparison of 1983-84 and 1984-85 Attendance Rates and the Percentage of Courses Passed for Intake/Transition Students

	Attendance (In Percents)						Percentage of Courses Passed					
Time Period	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	2,431	78.7	18.9	-3.5	1.9	-.19	2,580	65.6	47.1	-20.5	12.4	-.43
1984-85		75.2	20.8					45.1	34.7			
1983-84	2,431	78.7	18.9	-1.3	2.0	-.06	2,580	65.6	47.1	-18.5	8.8	-.37
Fall, 1984		77.4	20.9					47.1	38.3			
Fall, 1984	2,431	77.4	20.9	-4.4	3.6	-.24	2,580	47.1	38.3	- 3.3	1.6	-.09
Spring, 1985		73.0	24.5					43.8	39.9			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Intake/Transition students' attendance showed a small decline between 1983-84 and 1984-85.
- There was also a small decrease in courses passed from 1983-84 to 1984-85.

Table B-2

Comparison of 1983-84 and 1984-85 Attendance Rates and the Percentage of Courses Passed for Extracurricular Students

	Attendance (in Percents)						Percentage of Courses Passed					
Time Period	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	226	89.5	10.8	-2.2	1.0	-.17	261	78.4	30.0	- 9.3	0.7	-.47
1984-85		87.3	11.8					64.6	30.7			
1983-84	226	89.5	10.8	-1.3	0.4	-.10	261	78.4	30.0	-9.3	4.1	-.28
Fall, 1984		88.2	11.2					69.1	34.1			
Fall, 1984	226	88.2	11.2	-1.8	4.2	-.14	261	69.1	34.1	-8.2	1.2	-.25
Spring, 1985		86.4	15.4					60.9	35.3			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Extracurricular students' maintained their initially high attendance rate of about 85 percent throughout the program.
- Extracurricular students passed slightly fewer courses in 1984-85 than in 1983-84.

Table 8-3

Comparison of 1983-84 and 1984-85 Attendance Rates and the Percentage of Courses Passed for Project SOAR Students

	Attendance (In Percents)						Percentage of Courses Passed					
Time Period	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	157	80.3	15.6	-0.5	4.0	-.02	167	46.0	45.6	-14.5	15.7	-.31
Fall, 1984		79.8	19.6					31.5	29.9			
1983-84	157	80.3	15.6	-0.1	2.7	.00	167	46.0	45.6	5.7	6.3	.10
Spring, 1985		80.2	18.3					51.7	39.3			
Fall, 1984	157	79.8	19.6	0.4	1.3	.02	167	31.5	29.9	20.2	9.4	.54
Spring, 1985		80.2	18.3					51.7	39.3			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Project SOAR students maintained their intially high attendance rate at 80 percent throughout the program.
- The percentage of courses passed by Project SOAR students increased meaningfully during their participation in the program.

Table B-4

Comparison of 1983-84 and 1984-85 Attendance Rates and the Percentage of Courses Passed for Operation Success Students

	Attendance (In Percents)						Percentage of Courses Passed					
Time Period	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	327	76.6	19.5	-4.9	1.5	-.26	340	48.6	35.4	-15.0	0.9	-.40
1984-85		71.7	21.0					33.6	34.5			
1983-84	327	76.6	19.5	-3.2	2.6	-.16	340	48.6	35.4	-14.3	1.3	-.36
Fall, 1984		73.4	22.1					34.3	36.7			
Fall, 1984	327	73.4	22.1	-3.3	1.5	-.19	340	34.3	36.7	-1.2	1.3	-.04
Spring, 1985		70.1	23.6					33.1	38.0			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Students' attendance showed a small decline of about four percentage points from 1983-84 to 1984-85.
- Operation Success students passed fewer than 50 percent of their courses during all time periods studied.

Table 8-5

Comparison of 1983-84 and 1984-85 Attendance Rates and the Percentage of Courses Passed for Mentoring Students

	Attendance (In Percents)						Percentage of Courses Passed					
Time Period	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	79	83.4	14.7	1.0	-1.5	.09	68	84.2	30.5	-28.2	0.1	-.84
1984-85		84.4	13.2					56.0	30.4			
1983-84	79	83.4	14.7	3.4	-2.0	.32	68	84.2	30.5	-24.7	2.0	-.65
Fall, 1984		86.8	12.7					59.5	32.5			
Fall, 1984	79	86.8	12.7	-4.7	3.1	-.42	68	59.5	32.5	- 7.5	1.7	-.27
Spring, 1985		82.1	15.8					52.0	34.2			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Mentoring students maintained their initially high attendance rate above 80 percent throughout the program. They also showed a small increase in attendance from 1983-84 to fall, 1984.
- Mentoring students showed a large decline in the percentage of courses passed between 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Table 8-6

Comparison of 1983-84 and 1984-85 Attendance Rates and the Percentage of Courses Passed for Holding Power Students

	Attendance (In Percents)						Percentage of Courses Passed					
Time Period	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size	N[a]	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	1,961	84.7	16.4	-2.3	1.3	-.16	2,014	77.9	38.6	-19.1	4.5	-.47
1984-85		82.4	17.7					58.8	34.1			
1983-84	1,961	84.7	16.4	-0.8	0.8	-.06	2,014	77.9	38.6	-16.7	0.9	-.39
Fall, 1984		83.9	17.2					61.2	37.7			
Fall, 1984	1,961	83.9	17.2	-2.9	3.7	-.20	2,014	61.2	37.7	-3.1	3.0	-.08
Spring, 1985		81.0	20.9					58.1	40.7			

[a] This total includes all students who had valid information in both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

- Holding Power students maintained their intially high attendance rate above 80 percent throughout the program.
- Holding Power students showed a small decline in the percentage of courses passed in 1984-85.